

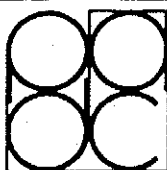
641 D Street, NW (COMMERCIAL BUILDING)  
(Leon's and Resenblatt's)  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-602

HABS  
DC,  
WASH,  
342-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127



PENNSYLVANIA  
AVENUE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

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GENERAL CONSULTANTS

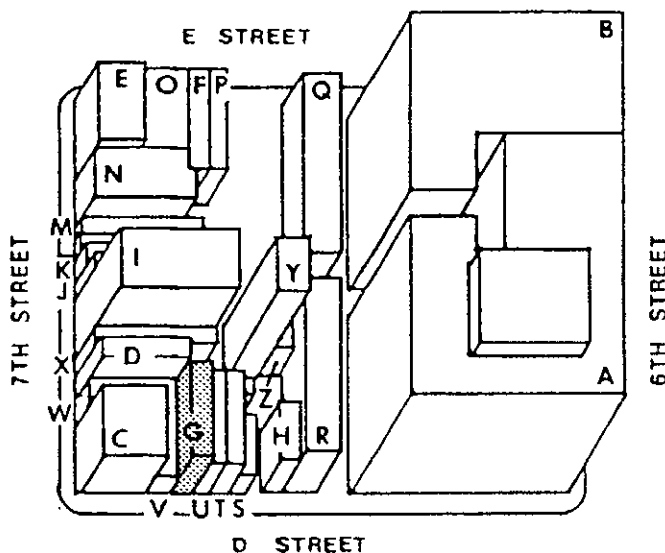
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

HABS  
DC,  
WASH  
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641 D Street, NW (COMMERCIAL BUILDING)  
(Leon's and Resenblatt's)  
Lot 813



This documentation was produced for mitigation purposes by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation. Additional documentation exists for Square 457, within which this structure stands. For photographs, historical, and descriptive data on Square 457, see HABS No. DC-597.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The 641 Building stands in a row of similar late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Century brick commercial row structures which occupy the western half of Square 457 along D Street. This four-story flat-roofed, red brick structure, rectangular in plan, completely fills its lot. There is no basement, but the site is higher at the rear, with the ground level approximately one half story above the first floor. The deep but narrow three bay building adheres to the facade line of its neighbors, with whom it shares party walls. Side parapet walls maintain the height of the facade. The building measures twenty feet by one hundred feet by approximately fifty-six feet high.

Brick bearing walls at east and west support wood floor and roof joists.

This otherwise simple late-Nineteenth Century commercial style building, housing a clothier and tailor, is distinguished by an elegant brick facade which has remained intact above the ground floor despite extensive alterations elsewhere in the building. Three stories of windows rise above the first floor arcade, and are capped by an elaborate brick entablature, which is not original to the building. This arcade contains display windows and a recessed central entry and provides access to the building. There is no rear entry, although one probably existed before it was blocked by the expansion of a nearby building. Service doors at the exposed northeast corner above ground level appear to have been added later and were used for admitting objects raised by a hoist, the beam and hook of which still remain. The building appears structurally sound, although the brickwork on the facade is in need of repointing and the wooden frame windows are deteriorating.

The interior of the first floor consists of a single undifferentiated sales area with a storage and work room behind. The upper floors are inaccessible as the stairs were removed in a past remodeling.

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The 641 Building illustrates the genre of utilitarian red brick commercial row structures which were built during the late-Nineteenth Century in the district and greater Washington. Although common in function, structure and plan, the building presents a facade of elegant brickwork and proportions. The elaborate stylized entablature reflects the high level of masonry craftsmanship which was applied even to utilitarian buildings such as this one. It was built as a furniture warehouse in 1888 by Charles C. Graham and William Rice (Permit no. 1508, 3/8/1888).

The 641 Building, along with many of its neighbors on D Street, constitutes part of a transitional zone of buildings between Pennsylvania Avenue to the south and residential neighborhoods to the north. This area of small-scale commercial architecture stands between the ceremonial Washington of the mall and the residential areas of the city above F Street. The facade detailing, scale and proportions characterize the turn of the century commercial architecture in the area as well as visually enriching this length of D Street.

#### SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facade: The refined pressed red brick facade of the 641 Building follows the traditional tripartite division of a building into base, shaft and capital. The upper three floors have remained intact, the original configuration of the ground floor having been radically altered by a new arcade and display windows. An old flat full width canopy with a pressed metal soffit projects over the entrance. The second story windows, now boarded over, are taller than the rest, emphasizing the vertical thrust of the facade. All windows have shallow segmental arches, the extrados consisting of a projecting rowlock course. The tympanum of each frame features a scroll design in stenciled wood, sills are of kalamein construction.

The ornate entablature at the building's top displays a complex progression of brick coursing which abstracts the classical versions. Brick corbeling accomplishes the elaboration usually achieved by applied ornament. Large simulated brackets occur at each end. The architrave consists of several projecting rowlock courses. The frieze above this level contains gutae of molded brick. Alternating projecting and recessed brick corbels approximate triglyphs and metopes. The cornice contains a reverse ogee molding of pressed metal. Small gabled ornamental metal caps with centered medallions rest atop the end brackets.

September 1979



OBLIQUE VIEW OF D STREET  
(SOUTH) ELEVATION

Lot 7  
639-643 D Street

When originally platted (Bastert, 1872), Lot 7 was a rectangular lot situated in a southwest quadrant of the Square.

1819.....The lot was owned by John R. Plater. No lot or improvement assessment was given in the Records.

1824.....Plater's lot was assessed for \$1204.00.

After this date, the Tax Assessment Records showed a division of Lot 7 into three sublots. These are given individual listings.

Lot 7 Central (Sublot 813)  
641 D Street

Sublot 813 (Baist Plat Map, 1919), measured approximately 20' x 100' when platted on the Hopkins map, 1887.

1829/33..The central portion of original Lot 7 was owned by Thomas Southerland. He was assessed \$501.00 for the land.

1844.....Under the ownership of William Martin, the lot was assessed for \$602.00.

1855.....William Martin was listed in the Directories as a policeman at 396 D Street (This was the address 641 D Street prior to 1870).

1859.....Martin's lot assessment had increased to \$1907.00.

1862

to

1879.....The building had been occupied by various boarding houses, hotels and restaurants during this time. William Pullman and Alexander and Mary P. Geiger were owners most frequently mentioned.

1870.....The improvement value, to Martin, was \$8500.00. No lot value was given.

1878/79..Still titled to Martin, the lot value had increased substantially to \$3512.00.

1882

to

1888.....A variety store, owned by Edward Devlin, was located at 641 D Street.

1883/84..The owner and lot value were unchanged from the 1878/79 Tax Record.

1888.....Building Permit #1508, 3/8/1888: Erect a four-story furniture warehouse with pressed brick front, flat tin roof; two store windows with 2' - 8" projection. Builder: Charles C. Graham & William Rice. Cost: \$5,000.00.

1893/94..Samuel Porter had assumed ownership of the lot. The lot value was \$4516.00 and the building improvement was \$3500.00.

1893.....Building Permit #2130, 4/21/1893: Rebuild show windows, general repairs. Cost: \$300.00.

1896  
to

1932.....The Goldberg family (George, Joseph, Hyman, Herman and Hannah), were owners of a clothing store at this address.

1899/

1900.....The new lot owner was Matilda Goldschmid. She was assessed \$4014.00 for the property, \$2700.00 for improvements to the structure.

1928.....Building Permit #116317, 8/8/1928: Take down existing show windows and replace. Builder: Morns Bennett. Cost: \$25.00.

1933  
to

1981.....Rosenblatt's Clothing Company, a men's clothing store, has been the long-term tenant.

1935.....Building Permit #177956, 3/16/1935: Sign.



## SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment  
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map